

**Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, February 28, 1796,
The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes.
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Ford.**

TO JOHN ADAMS J. MSS.

Monticello Feb. 28. 96.

I am to thank you my dear Sir for forwarding M. D'Ivernois' book on the French Revolution. I receive everything with respect which comes from him. But it is on politics, a subject I never loved, & now hate. I will not promise therefore to read it thoroughly. I fear the oligarchical executive of the French will not do. We have always seen a small council get into cabals & quarrels, the more bitter & relentless the fewer they are. We saw this in our committee of the states; & that they were from their bad passions, incapable of doing the business of their country. I think that for the prompt, clear & consistent action so necessary in an executive, unity of person is necessary as with us. I am aware of the objection to this, that the office becoming more important may bring on serious discord in elections. In our country I think it will be long first; not within our day, & we may safely trust to the wisdom of our successors the remedies of the evil to arise in theirs. Both experiments however are not fairly committed & the result will be seen. Never was a finer convass presented to work on than our countrymen. All of them engaged in agriculture or the pursuits of honest industry independent in their circumstances, enlightened as to their rights & firm in their habits of order & obedience to the laws. This I hope will be the age of experiments in government, & that their basis will be founded in principles of honesty, not of mere force. We have seen no instance of this since the days of the Roman republic, nor do we read of any before that. Either force or corruption has been the principle of every modern

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government, unless the Dutch perhaps be excepted, & I am not well enough informed to accept them absolutely. If ever the morals of a people could be made the basis of their own government it is our case; & who could propose to govern such a people by the corruption of a legislature, before he could have one night

of quiet sleep must convince himself that the human soul as well as body is mortal. I am glad to see that whatever grounds of apprehension may have appeared of a wish to govern us otherwise than on principles of reason & honesty, we are getting the better of them. I am sure from the honesty of your heart, you join me in detestation of the corruptions of the English government, & that no man on earth is more incapable than yourself of seeing that copied among us, willingly. I have been among those who have feared the design to introduce it here, & it has been a strong reason with me for wishing there was an ocean of fire between that island and us. But away politics.

I owe a letter to the Auditor on the subject of my accounts while a foreign minister, & he informs me yours hang on the same difficulties with mine. Before the present government there was a usage either practised on or understood which regulated our charges. This government has directed the future by a law. But this is not retrospective, & I cannot conceive why the treasury cannot settle accounts under the old Congress on the principles that body acted on. I shall very shortly write to Mr. Harrison on this subject & if we cannot have it settled otherwise I suppose we must apply to the Legislature. In this I will act in concert with you if you approve of it. Present my very affectionate respects to Mrs. Adams & be assured that no one more cordially esteems your virtues than, dear Sir, your sincere friend & servant.